



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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Contact: Miles McEvoy (360) 902-1924

Mike Louisell (360) 902-1813

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, Washington 98504-2560

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Quality of WSDA organic program brings further European-based accreditation Accreditation sets stage for expanding Washington organic exports

OLYMPIA – Exports of Washington’s organic food products to Europe continue to grow, in part because of high satisfaction levels importers have toward standards achieved by the Organic Food Program at the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA). The list of organizations and accreditation bodies approving WSDA’s program keeps expanding, including accreditation in December from the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements or IFOAM.

IFOAM is a global organization that provides consistent standards for internationally traded organic products. Accreditation provides assurance to the international organic market that organic products meet international organic standards. IFOAM, based in Germany, accredited WSDA’s European Organic Verification Program, one of several programs conducted by WSDA to assist the state’s organic community in meeting rigorous overseas organic trade requirements.

“IFOAM is the gold standard for the organic food industry,” said Miles McEvoy, manager of the Organic Food Program. “The prestige of IFOAM accreditation enables the state’s organic food industry to be a preferential source for organic food products.” It also increases the number of European countries, such as Sweden, that allow the import of organic products certified by WSDA.

WSDA is the only state in the U.S. to achieve IFOAM accreditation. Access to the European organic market is difficult due to distinct European standards and regulatory requirements. U.S. organic standards set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture are similar, but not equivalent to European organic standards. Over the last six years, the Organic Food Program has obtained authorization for its organic program from a variety of regulatory authorities.

The European Union provides an important market for Washington’s organic crops. Last year, more than \$10 million dollars of organic apples and pears were shipped to Europe. One-third of all apples and one-half of all pears exported from Washington to the European Union are organic.

In order to maintain access there, WSDA used a federal specialty crop grant to pursue IFOAM accreditation. The Washington Apple Commission and Pear Bureau Northwest also contributed to the effort.

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“The international organic market continues to expand and offer market opportunities to Washington’s agricultural industry,” said McEvoy, a past president of the National Association of State Organic Programs. “Consumer research and marketing studies indicate that the organic market will continue to expand in both the U.S. and Europe. The successful completion of the IFOAM accreditation process confirms the quality of our Organic Food Program and sets the stage for an expansion of Washington organic exports.”

For further information regarding IFOAM accreditation, contact Miles McEvoy, organic program manager, in Olympia at (360) 902-1924 or mmcevoy@agr.wa.gov. Information on WSDA’s Organic Food Program is on the Web site at <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/default.htm>.

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